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China Watchers Ponder Basis of Report on Mao

by Joseph Lelyveld
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A recent visitor to Peking reports having been told by Chinese officials that Richard M. Nixon wrote a letter to Premier Chou at the time of his resignation as President. Mr. Nixon was said to have expressed regret that he would not be able to take part in the continued improvement of relations between the United States and China.

Premier Chou, who has been reported ill for several months, was said to have sent a prompt and sympathetic response, assuring the former President that he was still esteemed in Peking for having unfrozen the relations between the two countries.

In conversation with foreigners, Chinese officials have left little doubt that they were unimpressed by the Watergate scandals and now genuinely regret Mr. Nixon's departure.

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